

# Books of Special Interest

## Saving the Thunderer

THE LONDON TIMES UNDER THE MANAGERSHIP OF MOBERLY BELL. By F. HARCOURT KITCHIN ("Bennett Copplestone"). New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1925.

Reviewed by ALLAN NEVINS

MR. KITCHIN'S story contains such dramatic and heroic elements that it should interest many readers who know and care nothing about newspaper history. It is the story of how Moberly Bell, who became business manager of the London *Times* in 1890, labored until he fell dead in his office chair in 1911 to save the great journal from extinction or a worse fate than extinction. That the *Thunderer* still vigorously exists is in large part due to the fight which this ponderous, gruff, combative, and high-minded man waged for it.

It was a fight against forbidding odds. As Mr. Kitchin, who from 1895 to 1909 was chief assistant to Bell, tells us, the newspaper was in a sadly weakened condition by the early nineties. The large reserve fund which the third John Walter had accumulated as a bulwark against future disaster had recently been divided by the unincorporated partners. The libel suit which grew out of the publication of the forged Pigott Letters regarding Parnell cost the *Times* \$1,250,000, and half of its reputation for the impartial and truthful presentation of news. The circulation was decreasing at a slow, steady rate which indicated that veteran subscribers were dying, and no new buyers taking their places. In its management the *Times* had become sadly antiquated. It still lacked any planning or arrangement of the news, so that readers groped helplessly among its jumbled columns. Its advertising had been so grossly neglected that other sheets, especially the *Daily Telegraph* and *Morning Post*, had acquired much of its business. Worst of all, the drafting of reforms was rendered difficult by the inchoate constitution of the journal, which consisted of three different and overlapping properties. The *Times* as a newspaper—which meant simply its goodwill and copyright—was vested in an association of private partners; the *Times* building was the private property of the two Walters; and the contract for printing the *Times* was also held by these half-brothers. The Walters were gentlemen of the county-family type with little business ability; their main interest lay in the profits of the printing arrangement, and they troubled themselves little with Moberly Bell's business management, or George Earle Buckle's editorial policy.

Bell spent his best energies for more than a quarter century to keep the *Times* from going on the rocks, pinching expenses and trying expedients. He sought to drum up display advertisements. He supported Buckle in various editorial innovations, of which the institution of the *Times Literary Supplement* in 1902, under the able direction of Bruce Richmond, was the most important. He encouraged Valentine Chirol in obtaining the right men to cover foreign fields, such as Morrison of Peking for China. He was willing to pay for the various luminaries which the *Times* developed or obtained—Arthur Clutton-Brock as special writer, Harold Child as leader-writer, A. B. Walkley as dramatic critic, Repington as military correspondent, and Hartley Withers as financial writer. But the straits into which the *Times* had fallen required heroic measures, and it was necessary to turn to circulation "stunts." Bell wisely believed that the *Times* must be kept a three-penny paper of high standards, appealing to a select audience, but he thought that only part of its potential public had been reached. His great coup in promoting the paper was his alliance with the enterprising American bookseller, Horace Hooper, in selling the ninth edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. The *Times* loudly whooped it up for the Britannica, and obtained a handsome commission on every one of the 33,000 sets sold in the British Empire. Hooper and his partner Jackson made far more, for they drew the undivided profits upon the huge American sale. Other books followed, among them the Century Dictionary, and then a tenth edition of the Britannica. The whole bookselling business helped circulation, and yielded revenues which could be used in other schemes for setting the *Times* on its feet. The most ambitious of these schemes, the *Times* Book Club, promised to be a glittering success, and then turned into a ghastly failure.

The *Times* had been almost bankrupt in

1890. Bell was in a desperate straits until 1905, when a terrible blow. The number of subscribers fell to a point where the paper was financially ruined. Bell had to make a desperate appeal to the public, and in 1905 he was able to secure a loan of £200,000. This was a desperate measure, but it saved the paper. Bell had to make a desperate appeal to the public, and in 1905 he was able to secure a loan of £200,000. This was a desperate measure, but it saved the paper. Bell had to make a desperate appeal to the public, and in 1905 he was able to secure a loan of £200,000. This was a desperate measure, but it saved the paper.

It was a tragic end for a devoted and indomitable fighter. No reader of the book but will admire the lifelong constancy shown by the big-bodied and big-hearted Bell. Yet it was not so tragic as it at first seemed, for a decade later came that resurrection of the *Times* which but for him might have been impossible. Mr. Kitchin tells his story well, though it has one great fault—there is altogether too much Kitchin in it.

## French Tales

THE LIFE OF HENRY BRULARD. By HENRI BEYLE-STENDHAL. Translated by CATHERINE ALISON PHILLIPS. Knopf. 1925. \$3.00.

THE DIABOLIQUES. By JULES BARBEY-D'AUREVILLE. Translated by ERNEST BOYD. Knopf. 1925. \$3.00.

Reviewed by MALCOLM COWLEY

OF THESE two volumes of the Blue Jade Library one, "The Diaboliques," is a collection of short stories, known widely by name on the Continent but almost never read; a volume as interesting and neglected as "The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym." The other, "The Life of Henry Brulard," is an important document translated for the first time; it is the autobiography of the greatest French novelist.

For thought he is not so widely known as Balzac, Zola, Flaubert, or Anatole France, Stendhal's influence is deeper and will probably be more permanent. Indeed, it is not without reason that he is called the master and model of the contemporary novel. The importance of the present volume rests almost wholly on this fact. It represents Stendhal's attempt to set down, for his own benefit or that of "the reader of 1880," just what sort of boy and man he had been. Curiously, it was not till 1880 that the manuscript was discovered. It was published ten years later: more than half a century after Stendhal laid it aside, less than half completed. It forms the exact portrait of a state of mind, but is more a document than a work of art.

The other volume is of a different nature. "The Diaboliques" contains the most carefully labored short stories of Barbey-d'Aureville. He wrote them at a period when the romantic passions had soured into Satanism, which in its usual manifestations is thoroughly ridiculous. On the other hand, the characters of "The Diaboliques," by the violence of their passions, acquire a dignity which is that of Racine's heroines. They are ridiculous, perhaps, but no one dares to laugh.

Barbey's emotions are confined within the post-romantic circle of love and death, but he is able to lend dignity to love and to describe death with passion. His chief virtue, however, is the richness of his style. Much of its quality is lost even in Mr. Boyd's painstaking translation. Two English words, occasionally even three, are used to render a single brilliant adjective of the original. Here the translator's aim is to give the exact shade of meaning, and often he succeeds, but in his success he destroys the pattern. With a mind less figurative than Barbey's, he blunts the metaphors by inserting "one

might say" or "you would think." Thus he writes, "Arms vigorous enough, *you would think*, to grasp the wheels of the car of life and twine around the spokes and stop its course by sheer force." The italicized words add nothing to the image; indeed, they diminish the force of it. They are nowhere to be found in the French text.

These are questions of taste, not learning, for Mr. Boyd is a competent translator. As much cannot be said for the translator of "Henry Brulard." It is true that the original text, in its rough state, is difficult to understand, but the English becomes positively incoherent. At one point Miss Phillips writes, "My father, the most elegant, the most subtle, the most polite of men." Her expression puzzled me, for it was at variance with the context. Referring to the French text I found, "My father, the least elegant, the most adroit, the most *politic* of men." The only excuse for such carelessness (if it is indeed carelessness and not ignorance) is the fact that translation is held in so little esteem today, and aid so beggarly, that one can earn a living only by working rapidly and never stopping to revise. And yet, Stendhal is great enough to deserve more respectful treatment.

## Boyd on Mencken

MODERN AMERICAN WRITERS, IV. H. L. MENCKEN. By ERNEST BOYD. New York: Robert M. McBride & Co. 1925.

Reviewed by L. M. HUSSEY.

IN December 1923 H. L. Mencken published a buxom valedictory essay in *The Smart Set* wherein looking back over fifteen years of his pastorate as critic to that journal, he computed the number of words uttered from *The Smart Set* pulpit at a round nine hundred thousand. But this staggering figure took no account of the additional words spoken from other rostra. Making the count from all his books, all his magazine articles, and all his contributions to the *Sunpaper*, the total, I doubt not, would run well over two million. Over two million words on *belles lettres*, bad writers, politics, critics, medicine, biology, uplifters, The War, military science, the Maryland Free State, women, philosophy, music.

In this sea of words Ernest Boyd essays now to chart the prevailing winds and more obvious currents. During the late years of his eminence like attempts have been made in behalf of Mencken, attempts to render the man and his doctrine succinctly. Yet, as I see it, no other critic has performed the job quite so well as Boyd. Boyd's Mencken is a thoroughly plausible figure and Boyd's book is critical entertainment of a high order.

The book begins by exposing the fallacies of the Mencken legend. The Nietzschean Mencken, the wild hackster, the Antichrist, the truculent agent of Wilhelmstrasse is shown as a myth. And, as the authentic man of flesh and bone, we meet H. L. Mencken the comfortable burgher, fleeing the lewdness of New York, living with his family in Baltimore, laying brick in the backyard, and cultivating his pet turtles and his cellar.

Having sketched this preliminary portrait, Boyd moves readily enough to his larger canvas which is to depict Mencken in all his phases as an American of extraordinarily high percentage, as the very osmazome of the native soil. Here is a thesis that has become popular in current Mencken criticism and it is a thesis that Ernest Boyd maintains with great persuasiveness. Indeed, the Boyd presentation is so apt that it half convinces me. However, on second thought, I remain dubious. I cannot really see Mencken as the arch-typical American nor does the indubitable fact of his entire absorption by the American scene suffice to persuade me.

Instead, I see him as a man who would have functioned as a writer in any clime and under any government. There was implanted in his germ-plasm the artist's urge, the urge to express himself. The soil did not make him; he has used the soil as stuff for self-expression. Set down, let us say, in France at a tender age, subsequently he would have piled up his two million words as inevitably on those shores as on these, with the difference that he would have dealt with the French rather than the American scene.

## American Martyrs

THE JESUIT MARTYRS OF NORTH AMERICA. By JOHN J. WYNNE, S. J. New York: The Universal Knowledge Foundation. 1925. \$1.50.

Reviewed by HENRY LONGAN STUART

APICTURE by one of the modern Italian school of painters that used to be popular in reproduction shows us a group of cardinals and high prelates gathered together in an ante-room of the Vatican and listening to a terrible tale of torture and hardship told them by a missionary friar. The prelates in silk robes and lace rochets lean back in their chairs sipping the after dinner coffee. Still further to enforce the contrast, the monk, in robe of brown wool and rope girdle, leans forward as he talks, showing his mutilated hands.

The picture, theatrical and meretricious as it is, inevitably recurs to the memory as we read Father John J. Wynne's picturesque and documented history of the six priests and two laymen whom Rome two months ago, raised to the honors of its altars amid all the pomp and circumstance of Papal ritual. Two of them fell on soil over which the stars and stripes floats today so may fitly be considered America's proto-martyrs. All of them were generous and devoted men, who before they gave up their lives had sacrificed all that, from a worldly point of view, makes life worth living to the chimerical vision of founding a great Indian Christian nation in the region of the Lakes. Parkman was the first to familiarize the American public with the story of their failure and triumph. He did so fairly on the whole and with such humanity that, while the moral he draws smacks a little unctuous in the ears of the modern historian, the facts he gives have never been essentially controverted.

Father Wynne's story, as is natural with a writer who belongs to the order which these noble men glorified by their martyrdom, dwells not so much on the political aspect and results of their efforts as upon the sanctity of their lives and the positive thirst for hardship and for the Cross which nerved them to their appalling task. The unfortunate influence upon their missions of the religious strife that was raging in Europe throughout the sixteenth century is given its proper perspective, but Father Wynne sees rather ignorance than positive malice in the conduct of the Dutch. "The burgers did not mean to incite the Hurons to molest their missionaries. This they proved later by their persistent efforts to obtain the release of Jogues from his Indian captors . . ." The conduct of the English colonists, and the fruitless mission of pere Druillettes to Boston does not fall within the scope of Father Wynne's work, but the personal kindness shown to him by Endicott and the authorities of the Bay settlement would seem to prove that cold-heartedness and policy rather than malevolence was the ground of their refusal to cooperate.

On an occasion like the present such things fall into the background and the noble personal character of the Jesuit martyrs takes first place. We stand astonished, not only at the heroism of Jogues, Brebeuf and their companions, many of them of feeble constitution but at the capacity of men, under strong religious enthusiasm, to endure. Scorched, mutilated, enslaved in turn by the men they are catechizing and by their tribal enemies, the lives of these men pass in a positive phantasmagoria of suffering and visionary consolation that can never be realized by the positive mind. "When the verse was ended" it is Jogues speaking, "I seemed to be no longer in our cabin, but in a place I knew not, when all at once I heard a verse sung which had reference to the happiness of the Saints, and the delights they enjoy in the kingdom of heaven."

The rocks and woods amid which the summer camper makes holiday today have torn the feet and hands of these noble men, and seen their martyrdom, the lakes in which he fishes have been furrowed by their canoes. It is impossible to read the stirring record of their apostolate which Father Wynne gives us without feeling that they have made the country of the Lakes consecrated ground to men of every race and religious belief.

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## Books of Special Interest

### A Chinese Beauty

THE MOST FAMOUS BEAUTY OF CHINA: The Story of Yang Kuei-fei, by Shu-Chiung. By MRS. WU LIEN-TEH. New York: D. Appleton & Co. 1925. \$2.

Reviewed by FLORENCE AYSCOUGH

MRS. WU LIEN-TEH'S life of the most "artful" of the four outstanding beauties of China is very timely. Chinese names are always a difficulty to Western readers, but those of Yang Kuei-fei and Ming Huang, of the poets Li Tai-po, Tu-Tu, Po Chü-i, Wang Wei and so on are daily becoming more easily recognized, and it is a good thing that the personalities whom these names represent should be more intimately known.

A vast amount of fable, and many legends in regard to their lives have necessarily accumulated during the passing centuries; but certain solid facts provide a framework of support to the varied forms in which these tales appear.

Doubtless, during the T'ang dynasty, a very beautiful and fascinating woman did rule and ruin Ming Huang—the Brilliant Sovereign—to use his canonical name, but as to the manner in which she was introduced to his notice, accounts differ. That she was a daughter of the Yang Clan is known, and that her personal name was Yü Huan—Jade Armlet—is a point of agreement in the different records; that her sisters and other relatives were given influential posts is also a matter of history, but whether the infamous prime minister, Yang, who was largely responsible for the appalling dynastic collapse in A. D. 756, was her cousin or her brother is a particular wherein historians are at odds. These details, however, do not matter very greatly. The point is that Jade Armlet has come to represent a certain historical type. The Chinese populace learn their history from innumerable plays of a more or less apocryphal nature, and the "untutored people" who earn their living by the "bitterness of strength" (which phrase is a literal translation of the word "coolie"), are charmed by Jade Armlet's exquisite beauty, scandalized by her conduct, and saddened by her tragic fate.

Whatever the manner of her introduction to the Imperial seraglio, she was speedily appointed a Kuei-Fei—exalted imperial concubine—a rank second only to that of Empress, and Jade Armlet is generally spoken of as Yang Kuei-Fei—that is the exalted imperial concubine of the Yang Clan. Mrs. Wu explains in a footnote on page eighteen that the words Kuei-Fei are only a title and not the personal name of her heroine, but it is misleading to use the term throughout the work.

The book consists of a series of disconnected scenes taken from a number of different sources, which illustrate various phases in the favorite's life. Mrs. Wu has a remarkable command of English, and tells her story in a simple, absolutely unaffected, and most convincing manner. Chapter XIX, The Tragic End, is very good indeed, and the translation of Yang Kuei-Fei's lament, uttered when she realized that her Imperial lover had agreed that she be put to death, is excellent. It opens with the lines:

*The flowers are withered, the rain is falling,*

*The bright moon is hidden behind the clouds;*

*For we who are one in soul are to be separated;*

As there is no statement to the contrary, one imagines that the translation is by Mrs. Wu. If this be so, it is a thousand pities that she did not render all the poems quoted in the book herself. Many of the versions by other writers which she has included are very very far from the original texts. They are not only inaccurate but in many cases extremely poor.

The illustrations to Mrs. Wu's book are extremely interesting.

### English Furniture

THE DICTIONARY OF ENGLISH FURNITURE. Vol. I A-Ch. By PERCY MACQUOID and RALPH EDWARDS. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1924. \$55.00.

Reviewed by MYRIC R. ROGERS  
Smith College

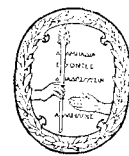
THE many excellent treatments of English furniture which have appeared of recent years have been concerned mainly with the development of the various forms belonging to each period as a whole. The material has been discussed as it were in a series of horizontal slices and used to illustrate the artistic and social tendencies of each particular age. Such a general evolutionary point of view must of course be the basis for any sound understanding of the subject, but it undoubtedly tends to interrupt and somewhat obscure the life history of the individual forms.

In their new monumental work Messrs. Macquoid and Edwards have adopted the "vertical" system, taking each article in turn and following its career "From the Middle Ages to the late Georgian Period." These chronological bounds are not as limited as would appear since the vast majority of our mobiliary family attained their full development from more or less rudimentary beginnings within that space of time. In its general arrangement as a sort of encyclopedic dictionary the work follows that of Henry Havard's "Dictionnaire de l'Ameublement" which the student of French furniture and decorative art has enjoyed for some decades. (The French awoke to the quality of their heritage much earlier than their neighbors). The authors of the present work, however, have limited themselves, with few exceptions, to furniture in its stricter sense whereas Havard covers the whole field of French decorative art. This seems a wise reservation since a completely parallel discussion would have meant either a sacrifice of the quality of the illustrations or an extension beyond reasonable cost limits.

From the students' point of view two features of the book are particularly noteworthy: first, the high quality of the illustrations of which there are some 500 in half tone and 19 plates in full color; second, the painstaking accuracy of the text which is strengthened at almost every point by quotations and excerpts from contemporary sources. Nothing is more helpful to the advanced student than this direct reference to source material.

The text is easily and clearly written and will prove entertaining to all interested in the subject. It is not, however, a popular book in the accepted sense but will be of enormous value as a reference work, the kind of thing long needed in the field. Mr. Macquoid's "History of English Furniture" has long taken its place as one of the few authoritative essays in the subject. The Dictionary is the result of some twenty years further experience not only with the material but with its presentation. It is to be hoped that nothing will interfere with the appearance of the two remaining volumes, since the completed work will be indeed a boon.

The sole adverse criticism the writer can offer without a minute survey is in regard to the method of binding. It is attractive in appearance but structurally entirely too fragile to support the weight of the heavy enamelled paper. The writer's copy is already falling to pieces. This defect will be a source of serious inconvenience especially in public library and school use and by all means should be remedied in the forthcoming volumes.



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